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C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 001511

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [TW](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: DPP PROTESTS PLANNED AHEAD OF CROSS-STRAITS TALKS

REF: TAIPEI 1584

Classified By: Political Chief Dave Rank. Reasons: 1.4 b/d

¶1. (C) Summary. Taiwan,s Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) hopes to attract 100,000 people to a December 20 protest of cross-strait talks that opens two days later in Taichung City. Smaller protests are likely to greet the lead Chinese negotiator when he arrives the following day and to continue throughout the three days of meetings. Much of the anger is aimed at the proposed Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) with China that opposition leaders argue will cost Taiwan jobs. Authorities are prepared for violence, but the DPP leadership has said the protest would be peaceful and does not anticipate a repeat of bloody clashes that marred last year,s cross-strait meeting in Taipei. End Summary.

100,000 STRONG AND ARMED WITH POTS

¶2. (SBU) The DPP, in conjunction with pro-independence groups, is planning a series of protests during talks between the leaders of Taiwan,s Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and China,s Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS). The first and largest protest is scheduled to take place in Taichung City on December 20 to condemn the lack of transparency in cross-strait negotiations and to specifically condemn ECFA as a threat to jobs. The DPP hopes to attract 100,000 supporters to the event at which party elders -- including former Vice-President Annette Lu and former Premiers Su Tseng-chang and Frank Hsieh -- and Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen will lead marches across the city. Protesters will break into two groups and march to the city center for a three-hour rally. Official slogans include "Break the Black Box," a reference to the opacity of cross-strait negotiations, and "Save Our Rice Bowls," which represents jobs. Protesters plan to symbolically destroy a black box and to loudly bang pots and pans to symbolize their worries about "empty rice bowls." The DPP is counting on local party chapters, especially the one in Taichung County, to organize participants.

¶4. (SBU) A second, smaller protest is planned for the following day at Taichung Airport to greet the arrival of China's chief negotiator, Chen Yunlin. The fourth round of SEF-ARATS talks will be held December 22-24 at the city's Howard Hotel, where opposition groups plan to camp for the duration of the meetings. Although ECFA is not on the agenda, it is expected to be discussed on the sidelines.

VIOLENCE SAID TO BE LESS LIKELY THAN LAST YEAR

¶4. (C) Recalling the violence that erupted during last year,s SEF-ARATS talks in Taipei (reftel), Taichung police have mobilized 200 officers to provide security during the

talks and 1,000 officers to be on duty for the outdoor events. Premier Wu Den-yih pledged that the government would balance the need to maintain order with citizens' right to protest. The DPP leadership has argued that violence was less likely because its supporters were less desperate after the party did well in December 5 local elections.

15. (C) The protests will be a test of the DPP's power to organize as well as a gauge of how deep dissatisfaction with President Ma Ying-jeou's cross-Strait rapprochement runs. In November, a DPP protest against the government's decision to expand imports of U.S. beef was a desultory affair that attracted only a few thousand participants.

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